CALFED OPERATIONS COORDINATION GROUP
APRIL 21, 1999 MEETING NOTES AND ACTION ITEMS

Review of March 23 meeting notes

No revisions were made to the March 23, CALFED Ops meeting notes.

Announcements

Starting in May the CALFED Operations Group Meetings will be scheduled on the fourth Tuesday of every month.

The following handouts were provided at the meeting:

1. Steelhead Critical Habitat Public Hearing, NMFS, M. Simpson
2. 20 mm Delta Smelt Survey 1, April 12 – April 17, DFG, D. Sweetnam
3. SWP Operations Package, DWR, J. Spence
4. April 16 U.S. District Court Order, Judge Wanger, DWR, C. Creel
5. 1999 Vernalis Flow and Delta Pumping, USBR, J. Burke

SWRCB

On April 9, the Chief of the Division of Water Rights conditionally approved petitions filed by Merced Irrigation District, Turlock Irrigation District, and Modesto Irrigation District to temporarily change place of use and purpose of use for water appropriated under their water rights. The petitioners propose to temporarily transfer 110 taf in 1999 to conduct fishery experiments proposed under the Vernalis Adaptive Management Plan (VAMP). Similar petitions filed by Oakdale and South San Joaquin Irrigation Districts and San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors were not approved because they failed to demonstrate a real water transfer.

Consideration of the similar petitions for long-term change will be addressed in a new phase, Phase 2B, of the Bay-Delta water rights hearing commencing on Wednesday, June 9. The San Joaquin River upstream of Vernalis would be added to the place of use of the affected water rights, and fish and wildlife enhancement would be added as a purpose of use. The long-term changes would commence in April 2000 and continue for eleven years, through 2010.

In a response to a motion presented by the DWR, SWRCB extended the due date for the Phase 6 closing briefs until 5:00 pm on May 17, 1999.

Chinook Genetics Testing

The winter-run baseline investigation has been completed. Genetics characteristics can be used in a Mixed Stock Analysis (MSA) to estimate the proportion of winter-run in a multiple-run population, and to identify individual winter-run using a probability analysis. The widely used MSA results corroborate the individual identification.

The genetic analysis results from the past four years (96/97 - 98/99) of Chinook salvaged at the SWP and CVP facilities were summarized. Most of the genetic winter-run salvaged at the fish facilities were in the winter-run length range as defined in the Delta Model. Some of the genetic winter-run were larger than the winter-run curve range and even fewer fell below the range.

Less than half of the Chinook falling within the winter-run length range were genetic winter-run. About 10% of the Chinook larger than the winter-run length range were genetic winter-run, and a small proportion of the Chinook smaller than the winter-run length range were genetic winter-run.

Salvage samples can be processed in 1 to 2 weeks. Most of this time is used preparing the samples and delivering them to Bodega Marine Lab. The genetic analysis takes 1 to 2 days. The entire process can be compressed to several days when necessary.

Several articles from BML on this genetics project have been submitted to, or published in, peer review journals.

To date Spring-run Chinook can be estimated using genetic analysis by population, not individually. The population estimates have a relatively high error estimate at this time. BML is working on more genetic markers to improve the estimate.

The IEP Genetics PWT will be meeting April 26 to discuss management application of genetics results.

Fishery Status

Winter-Run Chinook Salmon: Winter-run salvage at the fish facilities decreased this week. This week, the loss was 247 from both State and federal facilities. The season total loss is well below 4,000 with the yellow light concern level at 4,547.

E-005917

Spring-Run / Steelhead Consultation: NMFS will issue a draft federal biological opinion for steelhead and a conference opinion for spring-run in a couple of weeks. DWR and USBR will review the draft opinion. DWR will then make appropriate changes to its application for spring-run take authorization under section 2081 of the Fish and Game Code with DFG to reflect the federal biological opinion as a SWP baseline condition. Both the biological opinion and the 2081 permit will be good for one year.

Spring-Run Chinook Salmon: The large group of spring-run sized smolts currently being salvaged at the facilities are not likely to be genetic spring-run. Thousands of young-of-the-year spring-run juveniles were tagged in Butte Creek earlier this year, but none have been observed at either Chipps Island or the salvage facilities.

Steelhead: Six public hearings will be held in May to discuss steelhead critical habitat. The end of the comment period on the steelhead critical habitat has been extended 60 days to July 5, 1999.

Splittail: The USFWS anticipates having incidental take numbers for splittail in a couple of weeks and responded positively to discussing these concern levels with staff from USBR and DWR.

Delta Smelt: The first 20-mm survey of the year was conducted April 12 – April 17 with the majority of the larvae observed in the central Delta, the Mokelumne River and the Napa River. Data between Chipps Island and San Pablo Bay have not yet been processed. Once all the data has been tallied the center of distribution is expected to be located closer to Suisun Marsh because of the wet hydrologic conditions this year. Adult Delta smelt move upstream to fresh water to spawn from late winter through early summer. After the larvae hatch they are planktonic (float with the water currents), and are washed downstream until they reach areas of brackish water in early to late summer.

Real time monitoring data for delta smelt may be accessed through a link on the California DFG's web site located at http://www.delta.dfg.ca.gov/.

Operations

Delta Operations Criteria: The required number of X2 days at Port Chicago have been met for April and excess days are now being accumulated to be applied to May if necessary.

The modified stoplogs were removed from the Suisun Marsh Salinity Control Gate Structure in early April. Preliminary analyses show that the Suisun Marsh salinity objectives will be met for the remainder of the control season (October – May). Although, DWR and USBR received a variance from the SWRCB for meeting Marsh salinity objectives during the three year Chinook salmon passage experiment, they will continue to monitor salinity levels and will operate the SMSCG structure as needed to meet the objectives this year.

Temporary Barriers: DWR was given approval by all regulatory agencies for the installation of the head of Old River Barrier in April, however the barrier was not installed due to high flows on the San Joaquin River at Vernalis.

Beginning mid-May, DWR will begin construction of all three agricultural barriers in the south Delta. These three barriers located on Middle River near Tracy Blvd., on Grantline Canal near Tracy Blvd. and on Old River near Tracy Pumping Plant should be fully installed by June 1.

South Delta Water Agency sent a letter to the CALFED Operations Group on April 12, 1999 requesting modifications to CVP and SWP operations during the period of time before installation of the agricultural barriers to protect drawdown of south Delta water levels. The USBR indicated it is reviewing the letter and would consider making accommodations.

Concern was raised over future head of Old River installations at higher pulse flow objectives. The concerns include San Joaquin River levee seepage and barrier integrity at flows greater than 7,000 cfs on the San Joaquin River. The consensus of the group was to give this topic higher priority in the future given the uncertainties encountered this year.

CVP/SWP Operations Status: Snowmelt has begun in earnest, which should cause Shasta Reservoir to come close to filling. The Trinity River Reservoirs are expected to completely fill which allows for the present diversion of Trinity water to the Sacramento River. Efforts are being made to offset the warming impacts of large tributary side flow into the Sacramento River downstream of Keswick. The current year's compliance criterion is 56 degrees Fahrenheit at Bend Bridge and it is being met through the use of the Temperature Control Device and release rates. Releases from Nimbus are 4,500 cfs and Folsom is likely to fill. Oroville will be releasing between 4,000 and 5,000 cfs based on snowmelt forecasts. Goodwin releases are 1,500 cfs and should continue at this rate through the pulse flow period, April 17 - May 17. Millerton Lake is near capacity and will likely spill, although the snowpack in the upper San Joaquin River watershed is below normal; reservoirs in the watershed are not expected to fill. The projects are operating to the objectives in the delta smelt biological opinion

and anticipate combined exports between 3,000 and 3,500 cfs through the pulse flow period, April 17 – May 17.

1999 Operations Plan: The projects were planning to export 3,000 cfs during the pulse flow period as part of the Vernalis Adaptive Management Plan (VAMP). VAMP is an Anadromous Fish Restoration Plan Delta Action outlined under the final CVPIA Administrative Proposal on the Management of Section 3406(b)(2) water. On April 16 the federal District Court issued a restraining order concerning the CVPIA implementation lawsuit. The order enjoins and restrains the Department of Interior from implementing the in-Delta AFRP measures unless it sets aside water to ensure no impact to CVP water users this year and next. Before DOI could be allowed to continue with AFRP implementation, it would have to present a plan to the Court showing compliance with the order. Since such a plan could not be developed, USBR and DWR did not go forward with export reduction under VAMP. Therefore, the March 6, 1995 Delta Smelt Biological Opinion became the governing criteria for SWP and CVP combined operations during the pulse flow period, April 17 - May 17. The opinion allows for exports equal to the greater of Vernalis base flow or 1,500 cfs whichever is greater. The opinion also outlines a discretionary action to maintain San Joaquin flow higher than exports. If possible, USBR purchases water to achieve the goals. If it cannot purchase enough water, then DWR and USBR will consider adjusting exports as long as there is no net loss of water supply. This year the objective is being achieved by a combination of flow augmentation and export reductions. Based on the latest forecasts available at the meeting, between 100 – 120 taf of pumping reduction would need to be recovered if exports were held to about 3,500 cfs through the pulse flow period. Proposed tools for the make up include:

- Using joint point of diversion to recover CVP San Luis storage in January, February, and March 2000.
- Acquiring water from Yuba and Stanislaus (up to 90 taf).
- Increasing exports in June up to the 35% E/I ratio by moving 30 TAF from upstream storage.

CVP contractors want assurances for make up citing the no net loss provisions under the Principles of Agreement (the "Accord") signed December 15, 1994. They want to see make up before the low point occurs at San Luis Reservoir in late summer or a temporary transfer of SWP water to the CVP to ensure no impacts to water supply.

Environmental stakeholders are opposed to any make up for water covered under section 3406(b)(2). Environmental stakeholders also suggest that upstream AFRP releases, meant to satisfy upstream fishery needs and

abandoned by the CVP, could also be used to recover impacts to the SWP. DWR believes that such upstream releases are already covered under the terms of the Coordinated Operations Agreement.

South Delta Water Agency objects to the proposed acquisitions of Stanislaus water because of possible long-term cumulative impacts.

ACTION ITEMS:

The USBR and DWR agreed to draft a make up plan and distribute it to the No Name Group by Friday, April 23.

The USBR will draft a letter to the SWRCB requesting the use of joint point of diversion for fishery action under Order WR 98-9.

San Joaquin River / VAMP: Flow on the San Joaquin River at Vernalis (6,500 cfs as of the meeting date) is short of the objective flow (7,020 cfs) most likely due to an increase in diversions between the reservoir release points and Vernalis brought about by warm weather. Releases on the Merced River have been increased by 800 cfs to compensate for the reduction in accretions. The increased releases mean that 110 taf of acquired water will probably not be sufficient to meet the objective flow through the pulse flow period. The USBR has identified additional sources of water if more than the 110 taf is needed.

No Name Group

There was a NNG conference call held April 20. This meeting was initiated to discuss the change in SWP and CVP export operations during the pulse flow period.

A meeting will be scheduled for Friday, April 23 to discuss the CVP and SWP plans to make up export reductions during the pulse flow period.

Agenda Items for Next Meeting . . . May 25